

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom *November 12, 2004*

President Bush. Thank you. Welcome. I'm pleased to welcome a statesman and a friend back to the White House. Prime Minister Blair is a visionary leader. I've come to know him as a man of unshakeable convictions. America's alliance with Great Britain has never been stronger, and we're working closely every day to spread that freedom that leads to peace.

Our two nations have shared in some of the most hopeful and positive achievements of our time. The people of Afghanistan have now chosen their President in a free election. The Taliban and the terrorists did everything they could to intimidate the long-suffering people of that country. Yet men and women lined up at the polls, some of them waiting for hours to have their first taste of democracy. The success of Afghanistan's election is a standing rebuke to cynicism and extremism and a testimony to the power of liberty and hope. The people of the United States and Great Britain can be proud of the role we have played in aiding the rise of a free nation and, in so doing, making our countries more secure.

Together we're serving the same cause in Iraq. Prime Minister Allawi authorized military operations to rid Fallujah of Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists, and American and Iraqi forces have made substantial progress in the last several days. Our coalition is training Iraqi security forces who are performing bravely and taking increasing responsibility for their country's security. British, American, and other coalition forces are helping provide stability that is necessary for free elections. And U.N. officials are helping the Iraqi people prepare for those elections, to be held in January.

As those elections draw near, the desperation of the killers will grow, and the

violence could escalate. The success of democracy in Iraq will be a crushing blow to the forces of terror, and the terrorists know it. The defeat of terror in Iraq will set that nation on a course to lasting freedom and will give hope to millions, and the Iraqi people know it.

The United States and Great Britain have shown our determination to help Iraqis achieve their liberty and to defend the security of the world. We'll continue to stand with our friends, and we will finish the job.

Prime Minister Blair and I also share a vision of a free, peaceful, a democratic broader Middle East. That vision must include a just and peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Our sympathies are with the Palestinian people as they begin a period of mourning. Yet the months ahead offer a new opportunity to make progress toward a lasting peace. Soon Palestinians will choose a new President. This is the first step in creating lasting democratic political institutions through which a free Palestinian people will elect local and national leaders.

We're committed to the success of these elections, and we stand ready to help. We look forward to working with a Palestinian leadership that is committed to fighting terror and committed to the cause of democratic reform. We'll mobilize the international community to help revive the Palestinian economy, to build up Palestinian security institutions to fight terror, to help the Palestinian government fight corruption, and to reform the Palestinian political system and build democratic institutions. We'll also work with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to complete the disengagement plan from Gaza and part of the West Bank.

These steps, if successful, will lay the foundation for progress in implementing the roadmap and then lead to final status negotiations.

We seek a democratic, independent, and viable state for the Palestinian people. We are committed to the security of Israel as a Jewish state. These objectives—two states living side by side in peace and security—can be reached by only one path, the path of democracy, reform, and the rule of law.

All that we hope to achieve together requires that America and Europe remain close partners. We are the pillars of the free world. We face the same threats and share the same belief in freedom and the rights of every individual. In my second term, I will work to deepen our transatlantic ties with the nations of Europe. I intend to visit Europe as soon as possible after my inauguration. My Government will continue to work through the NATO Alliance and with the European Union to strengthen cooperation between Europe and America.

America applauds the success of NATO and EU enlargement and welcomes the stability and prosperity that that enlargement brings. We must apply the combined strength and moral purpose of Europe and America to effectively fight terror and to overcome poverty and disease and despair, to advance human dignity, and to advance freedom.

In all that lies ahead in the defense of freedom, in the advance of democracy, and the spread of prosperity, America, the United Kingdom, and all of Europe must act together.

Mr. Prime Minister, welcome.

Prime Minister Blair. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for your gracious welcome to me here in the White House. And once again, many congratulations on your reelection.

There are three major issues that arise. The United States and the United Kingdom have stood together since September the 11th, 2001, in order to combat this new

form of global terrorism that we face. And the three things that we can do most to make sure that we defeat this terrorism, apart from being ever vigilant on security, are, first of all, to bring democracy to Afghanistan, which we are doing, as the successful election of President Karzai shows. And that is quite magnificent tribute not just to the courage of the Afghan people but, actually, also to the power of democracy.

Secondly, we have to complete our mission in Iraq, make sure that Iraq is a stable and a democratic country. And I have no doubt at all that whatever the difficulties the terrorists and insurgents, supporters of Saddam Hussein may pose for us, that we will overcome those difficulties—ourselves, the multinational force, together with the Iraqi Government—and ensure that Iraq can be that democratic, stable state that the vast majority of Iraqis, I know, will want to see.

And the third thing is, as the President rightly said a moment or two ago, we meet at a crucial time where it is important that we revitalize and reinvigorate the search for a genuine, lasting, and just peace in the Middle East. I would like to repeat my condolences to the Palestinian people at this time.

As you will have seen, we have set out the steps that we believe are necessary to get into a process that will lead to the two-state solution that we want to see. And I think those steps are very clear. They are, first of all, making sure that we set out a clear vision—that clear vision was articulated by President Bush some time ago, repeated by him today—of a two-state solution, two democratic states living side by side together in peace.

The second thing is, we need to support those Palestinian elections. That is a chance for the first beginnings of democracy to take hold on the Palestinian side. So it's important that we support it.

Thirdly, however, if we want a viable Palestinian state, we need to make sure that

the political, the economic, and the security infrastructure of that state is shaped and helped to come into being. We will mobilize international opinion and the international community in order to do that.

The fourth thing is that Prime Minister Sharon's plan for disengagement is important. I think we recognized that when we were here at the White House back in April of this year. That disengagement plan is now going forward. It's important that we support it, and then, on the basis of this, we are able, in accordance with the principles of the roadmap, to get back into final status negotiation, so that we have that two-state solution. And I think there is every possibility that we can do this, with the energy and the will and the recognition that in the end, it is only if the two states that we want to see living side by side are indeed democratic states where the rule of law and human rights are respected in each of them, that a just* peace could be secured.

I would also like to support very strongly what the President has just said about the transatlantic alliance. Again, I think there is a tremendous desire and willingness on the part of, certainly, our partners in the European Union to make sure that that alliance is strong. It's necessary for the security of the world. It's necessary for us to be able to tackle many of the problems that confront us.

I look forward to working with the President over these coming months in order to try and secure that progress that we have laid out for you today. And also, of course, we've had the opportunity to discuss the upcoming G-8 Presidency of the United Kingdom, and we intend to take those issues forward as well.

So, Mr. President, once again, many, many thanks.

President Bush. Sure.

* White House correction.

Prime Minister Blair. Thank you for your alliance and for your leadership at this time.

President Bush. Welcome, thanks.

Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you. With Yasser Arafat's death, what specific steps can Israel take to revive peace negotiations? And do you believe that Israel should implement a freeze on West Bank settlement expansion?

President Bush. I believe that the responsibility for peace is going to rest with the Palestinian people's desire to build a democracy and Israel's willingness to help them build a democracy. I know we have a responsibility as free nations to set forth a strategy that will help the Palestinian people head toward democracy. I don't think there will ever be lasting peace until there is a free, truly democratic society in the Palestinian territories that becomes a state. And therefore, the responsibility rests with both the Palestinian people and the leadership which emerges, with the Israelis to help that democracy grow, and with the free world to put the strategy in place that will help the democracy grow.

Prime Minister Blair. James.

Prospects for Middle East Peace

Q. James Blitz, Financial Times. Mr. President, can you say today that it is your firm intention that by the end of your second term in office, it is your goal that there should be two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side?

President Bush. I think it is fair to say that I believe we've got a great chance to establish a Palestinian state, and I intend to use the next 4 years to spend the capital of the United States on such a state. I believe it is in the interests of the world that a truly free state develop. I know it is in the interests of the Palestinian people that they can live in a society where they can express their opinion freely, a society

where they can educate their children without hate, a society in which they can realize their dreams if they happen to be an entrepreneur. I know it's in Israel's interest that a free state evolve on her border. There's no other way to have a lasting peace, in my judgment, unless we all work to help develop the institutions necessary for a state to emerge: civil society, based upon justice; free speech; free elections; the right for people to express themselves freely. The first step of that is going to be the election of a new President, and my fervent hope is that the new President embraces the notion of a democratic state.

I hate to put artificial timeframes on things. Unfortunately, I've got one on my existence as President. It's not artificial; it's actually real. And I'd like to see it done in 4 years. I think it is possible. I think it is possible.

I think it is impossible to think that the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of Great Britain can impose our vision. I think it's unrealistic to say, "Well, Bush wants it done, or Blair wants it done. Therefore, it will happen." But I think it is very possible that it can happen, because I believe people want to live in a free society, and our job is to help it happen.

Thank you. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

President's Upcoming Visit to Europe

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Prime Minister Blair wants a international conference on the Middle East. What has to happen before you would sign on to that? And will you name a U.S. envoy? And what would you like to accomplish on this Europe trip that you're planning?

President Bush. Let's see here. [Laughter] I'll start with the—accomplishing on the Europe trip. It is to remind people that the world is better off, America is better off, Europe is better off when we work together. And there's a lot we can accomplish working together. There's a lot we have accomplished working together.

We're working very closely to find Al Qaida and bring members of Al Qaida to justice. We've worked closely to free Afghanistan. We're working closely to interdict the flow of weapons of mass destruction. The Proliferation Security Initiative is based—the membership of which is a lot of members of the EU. I mean, there's a lot of things we're working together on. NATO expansion we worked together on. It was such a refreshing moment when the new leaders of—the leaders of the new countries in NATO walked in the room in the Czech Republic. It was a fantastic moment to see these proud members walk in and say, "We're now a member of the greatest alliance ever." And there's a lot we can continue to do.

First two questions?

Prospects for Middle East Peace

Q. Prime Minister Blair's idea about an international conference—

President Bush. Yes.

Q. —and the sending of a U.S. envoy to the Middle East.

President Bush. Right. In the spirit of the last question, we'll do what it takes to get a peace. And the conference—what the Prime Minister and I discussed last night is, do not we have an obligation to develop a strategy? And the answer is, absolutely, we have an obligation. And one way to do that is to include the Quartet to bring nations together and say, "Here's what it takes to help the Palestinians develop a state that is truly free." And I'm all for conferences, just so long as the conferences produce something. And we had a long discussion about whether or not a conference could produce a viable strategy that we could then use as a go-by for our own obligations as well as the obligations of the Palestinians, for them to have their own state. And the answer is, if that conference will do that, you bet I'm a big supporter.

But one thing is for certain: We are going to develop a strategy, so that once

the elections are over, we'll be able to say, "Here's how we will help you. If you want to be helped, here's what we're willing to do. If you choose not to be helped, if you decide you don't want a free, democratic society, there's nothing we can do. If you think you can have peace without democracy"—again, I think you'll find that—I can only speak for myself, that I will be extremely doubtful that it will ever happen. I've seen it work too many times—tried too many times.

Now, there's going to be people around who say, "The Palestinians can't develop a democracy. It's impossible for them to live in a free society." I strongly disagree with that. And so the whole premise of this strategy that we'll outline is all based toward that vision of a free and truly democratic society emerging.

See, what's going to happen is, when that happens, there will be great trust developed between Israel and the Palestinian people. Free societies are able—societies able to develop trust between each other, and there's clearly a lack of trust right now. And so, yes, I mean, we will do that what it takes to put a strategy in place and advance it and call upon other nations to develop—to work with us.

Prime Minister Blair. Yes, that's absolutely right. I mean, what we will do is anything that is necessary to make the strategy work. The important thing is that, first of all, there's got to be an agreement as to what a viable Palestinian state means. And what we're really saying this morning is that that viable state has to be a democratic state.

The second thing is, how do we get there? How do we enable the Palestinians to get there? We will do whatever it takes to help build support for that concept, to work through the details of it and make sure that it can actually be brought into being. But the bottom line has got to be that if you want to secure Israel and you want a viable Palestinian state, those are two states living side by side, and they are

democratic states living side by side. And we've got the chance over the next few months, with the election of a new Palestinian President, to put the first marker down on that.

Trevor.

Iran

Q. Trevor Cavanagh from The Sun. Mr. President, I know that Iran, as well as Iraq, has been a very significant part of the agenda for this week, and I'd like to ask you whether, in light of the nuclear ambitions of Iran, whether America would tolerate a nuclear Iran? And if the answer to that is no, would Britain, Mr. Prime Minister, stand as four-square behind America on this issue as it has done on Iraq?

President Bush. Let me make sure I understand your question. You're saying a—Iran with a nuclear weapon—

Q. Nuclear power.

President Bush. Nuclear power or nuclear weapon?

Q. Nuclear weapon.

President Bush. Okay. No, we don't want Iran to have a nuclear weapon, and we're working toward that end. And the truth of the matter is, the Prime Minister gets a lot of credit for working with France and Germany to convince the Iranians to get rid of the processes that would enable them to develop a nuclear weapon.

Prime Minister Blair. Absolutely. And there's an agreement in the international community to make sure that Iran comes into compliance with its international obligations. And we've been working with France and Germany but, obviously, with the United States and others too, to make sure that that happens.

President Bush. Let's see here. Cochran. John [John Cochran, ABC News].

Q. I'm totally shocked. [Laughter]

President Bush. That's why I called on you. [Laughter]

Democracy in the Middle East

Q. You know, you talk about democracy being so necessary. There are those who would say there is sometimes a harsh peace of a dictator. What if the Palestinian state comes up with somebody who is not a democrat but is willing to have peace with the Israelis? And let me transfer that to the Iraqis as well. What if the Iraqis come up with somebody who's not friendly to the United States, is not a democrat, but it's peaceful. Is this something you can live with?

President Bush. Well, first of all, if there's an election, the Iraqis will have come up with somebody who is duly elected. In other words, democracy will have spoken. And that person is going to have to listen to the people, not to the whims of a dictator, not to their own desires, personal desires. The great thing about democracy is you actually go out and ask the people for a vote, as you might have noticed recently. And the people get to decide, and they get to decide the course of their future. And so it's a contradiction in terms to say a dictator gets elected. The person who gets elected is chosen by the people. And so I don't—I'm not—

Q. You can be elected and be a tyrant.

President Bush. Well, you can be elected and then be a strong man, and then you get voted out, so long as you end up honoring democracy. But if you're true to democracy, you'll listen to the people, not to your own desires. If you're true to democracy, you'll do what the people want you to do. That's the difference between democracy and a tyrant.

And the Palestinians may decide to elect a real strong personality. But we'll hold their feet to the fire to make sure that democracy prevails, that there are free elections. And if they don't—the people of the Palestinian territory don't like the way this person is responding to their needs, they will vote him or her out.

And the reason why I'm so strong on democracy is, democracies don't go to war with each other. And the reason why is, the people of most societies don't like war, and they understand what war means. And one of these days, the people of the Palestinian—the Palestinians will realize that there is a bright future because freedom is taking hold—a future that enables their children to get educated, a future in which they can start their businesses, a future in which they're certain that the money that's going into the treasury of their government is being spent fairly, in a transparent way, a future in which corruption is not the norm, a future in which rule of law prevails. And that leads to a peaceful society.

I've got great faith in democracies to promote peace. And that's why I'm such a strong believer that the way forward in the Middle East, the broader Middle East, is to promote democracy.

I readily concede there are skeptics, people who say democracy is not possible in certain societies. But remember, that was said right after World War II with Japan. And today, one of the people that I work closest with is my friend Prime Minister Koizumi. And it's a—it's remarkable to me that we sit down at the same table, talking about keeping the peace in places like North Korea, and it really wasn't all that long ago in the march of history that we were enemies. The Prime Minister knows Koizumi. He's a good man. And he's an ally because democracy took hold in Japan. And yet there was a lot of skeptics. When you look at the writings right after World War II, a lot of people said, "You're wasting your time to try to promote democracy in Japan." There were some, I suspect maybe in Great Britain and I know in America, that were writing, "You're wasting your time to promote democracy in Germany," after World War II. And yet fortunately, people who preceded us had great faith in liberty to transform societies. And that's what we're talking about is taking place.

And it's hard, and it's difficult, particularly in a society like Iraq, because the terrorists understand the stakes of freedom. And they're willing to kill people in brutal fashion to stop it. And I believe we have a duty and an obligation to work to make sure democracy takes hold. It's a duty to our own country. It's a duty to generations of Americans and children of Great Britain to help secure the peace by promoting democratic societies.

Prime Minister Blair. First of all, I should say, Koizumi is a good man not just because I know him, but—[laughter]—although that helps a lot, I think. [Laughter]

But I think the President said something here that I really think is very, very important. In the politics—when I was first a member of Parliament and making my way up the greasy pole and all the rest of it, there was a view in foreign policy that you dealt with countries on the basis of whatever attitude they had towards you, but really, whatever they did within their own countries, that was up to them and didn't really make a difference to your long-term relationship. I think what we are learning today is that there is not stability of any true, long-term kind without democratic rights for free people to decide their government. Now, that doesn't mean to say we try and interfere with every state around the world, but it does mean that there's been a shift, and I think a shift quite dramatically, since 9/11 in the thinking that is informing our view of how we make progress.

That's why it wasn't enough to go into Afghanistan and root out Al Qaida or knock down the Taliban. We actually had to go there and say, "No, we must replace that with a democratic form of government," because, in the end, if we replace it simply with another dictator, then we'll get the same instability back. That's why in Iraq, we decided, when Saddam was removed, we didn't want another hard man coming in, another dictator.

Now, it's a struggle, because democracy is hard to bring into countries that have never had it before. But I've no doubt at all that the Iraqi people, given the chance—and indeed, you can see this in some of the local elections now down in the south of Iraq—given the chance, they'll want to elect their leaders. Why wouldn't they? I mean, why would they want a strong-arm leader who's going to have the secret police, no freedom of speech, no free press, no human rights, no proper law courts? The people want the freedom. What we recognized, I think, today, is that we're not going to have our security unless they get that freedom.

So when we come to the issue of Israel and Palestine, I think what we are saying is, we are going to work flat-out to deliver this. But people have to understand, we can't deliver something unless the people whom it affects actually want it to happen. And we don't believe there will be a viable future for a state of Palestine unless it's based on certain key democratic principles.

Now, I think that's a tremendous thing. And I also think that in the end—of course, you're right, people can vote for the people they'd like to vote for in elections, right? That's what democracy is about. I think we've got to have some faith, though, in the ability of ordinary people, decent people, to decide their own future. Because it's a curious thing, you look at all these Eastern European countries—Central, Eastern European countries in the European Union now, just democracies over the last 10 years—fierce election debates, changes of Government, often difficult circumstances when the Governments change. But you go to those countries and talk to the people there, and their sense of liberation and their sense of self-worth as a result of the freedom they have—that is the best testament to why it's sensible to have faith in democracy.

And sometimes when people say, "Well it's—you've got a Republican President and a progressive politician from across the

water,” but in my view, people from different sides of the political spectrum should be able to come together to argue that policy case, because democracy is something that should unite us, whatever political position we have.

David.

United Kingdom-United States Relations

Q. David Charter from The Times in London. Mr. President, first, the Prime Minister is sometimes, perhaps unfairly, characterized in Britain as your poodle. I was wondering if that's the way you may see your relationship? And perhaps, more seriously, do you feel for the—

Prime Minister Blair. Don't answer yes to that question. If you do, I would be—[laughter]—that would be difficult.

Q. Do you feel, for the strong support that Britain has given you over Iraq, that you have to pay back Britain for that support in some way?

President Bush. The Prime Minister made the decision he did because he wanted to do his duty to secure the people of Great Britain. That's why he made the decision—plenty capable of making his own mind. He's a strong, capable man. I admire him a lot. You know why? When he tells you something, he means it. You spend much time in politics, you'll know there's some people around this part of the—this kind of line of work where they tell you something, they don't mean it. When he says something, he means it. He's a big thinker. He's got a clear vision, and when times get tough, he doesn't wilt. When they—when the criticism starts to come his way—I suspect that might be happening on occasion—he stands what he believes in. That's the kind of person I like to deal with. He is a—I'm a lucky person—a lucky President, to be holding office at the same

time this man holds the Prime Ministership.

These are troubled times. It's a tough world. What this world needs is steady, rock-solid leaders who stand on principle, and that's what the Prime Minister means to me.

Prime Minister Blair. I just want to add one thing, which is that, well, this concept of payback—we are—we're not fighting the war against terrorism because we are an ally of the United States. We are an ally of the United States because we believe in fighting this war against terrorism. We share the same objectives. We share the same values. And if we look back over our own history in the last half-century or more, we, both of us, in different ways, the United States and Britain, have a cause to be thankful for this alliance and this partnership. And I should we—I believe we should be thankful that it is as strong as it is today. And as long as I remain Prime Minister of our country, it will carry on being strong, not because that's in the interests of America, simply, or in the interests of the international community, but because I believe passionately it is in the interests of Britain.

President Bush. Good job. Thank you, sir.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:25 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; Prime Minister Ayad Allawi of the Iraqi Interim Government; and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. Prime Minister Blair referred to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the United Kingdom Concerning the Middle East Peace Process

November 12, 2004

The United States and the United Kingdom share a vision of freedom, peace, and democracy for the Broader Middle East. That vision must include a just and peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, based on two democratic states—Israel and Palestine—living side by side in peace and security. Now is the time to seize the opportunity of new circumstances in the region to redouble our efforts to achieve this goal. This will require a series of steps which we look forward to taking with our international partners and the parties.

First, we re-commit to the overarching two-state vision set out by President Bush in his statement of June 24, 2002 and repeated in the Roadmap.

Second, we will support the Palestinians as they choose a new President within the next sixty days and as they embark upon an electoral process that will lead to lasting democratic institutions.

Third, following that, the President and the Prime Minister have agreed to mobilize international support behind a plan to ensure that the Palestinians have the political, economic, and security infrastructure they

need to create a viable state. There will be no lasting solution without a Palestinian state that is democratic and free, including free press, free speech, an open political process, and religious tolerance. Such a state will need a credible and unified security structure capable of providing security for the Palestinians and fighting terrorism. There must also be effective economic development and transparent financial structures which provide for the economic and social needs of the Palestinian people. The plan will be developed intensively over the coming period of time in concert with all the relevant partners.

Fourth, we endorse and support the disengagement plan of Prime Minister Sharon from Gaza and stipulated parts of the West Bank as part of this overall plan.

Fifth, these steps lay the basis for more rapid progress on the Roadmap as a reliable guide leading to final status negotiations.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's Radio Address

November 13, 2004

Good morning. Earlier this week, Prime Minister Allawi of Iraq authorized military operations to rid the city of Fallujah of Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists. American marines and soldiers, alongside Iraqi security forces, are on the offensive against the killers who have been using Fallujah as a base of operations for terrorist attacks and who have held the local population in the grip of fear.

Fighting together, our forces have made significant progress in the last several days. They are taking back the city, clearing mosques of weapons and explosives stockpiled by insurgents, and restoring order for law-abiding citizens.

In the course of this operation, Iraqi troops have discovered new evidence of the enemy's brutality. An Iraqi general has described hostage slaughter houses, where